

**GATES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 20, 2015**

The Gates County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session at 3:00 p.m. Tuesday, January 20, 2015 in the Cooperative Extension Auditorium, 112 Court Street, Gatesville for a joint meeting with the Gates County Planning Board and Board of Adjustment. Commissioners Hofler, Owens, Jordan, and Felton were present. Planning Board members Chuck Brothers, Brenda Felton, John Carter, Wade Askew and Sherwood Eason were present. Board of Adjustment members Joe Greene, Dan Lang and Graham Hawkins were present. Also present was County Manager, Natalie Rountree and County Planner, Jennifer Baptiste.

Chairman Hofler called the meeting to order.

Ms. Baptiste provided an overview of the joint meeting and provided the Boards with her background including her education and previous employment. She highlighted a few topics that everyone will need to consider through the process of compiling a comprehensive plan.

Ms. Baptiste shared with the Board an example of a comprehensive plan that was created for Anson County. One of the most important things that we need to do is establish goals for where we would like to see the County in the next 5 to 10 years. The goals will outline growth, industry, zoning etc.. As a CAMA community we have extra items that need to be considered, evaluated and reviewed by CAMA.

Commissioner Jordan verified that the comprehensive plan will not be an update to the CAMA Plan but will be in addition to the CAMA Plan. Ms. Baptiste said that it will be the land use plan is for the County, CAMA just provides additional rules that we must follow.

Ms. Baptiste stated she would like to reach out to a consultant to ensure we are compiling a document that is correct and in alignment with the CAMA plan. We will submit it to CAMA, FEMA, other agencies and surrounding communities for review prior to the approval. Ms. Baptiste would like to form a committee to contribute to the comprehensive planning process. Once written we will hold two separate hearings before the plan is adopted.

Commissioner Felton asked who the consultant would meet with to find out what Gates County needs. Ms. Baptiste explained that the consultant would be more of a facilitator and information gatherer. As facilitator the consultant would find the information and present it to the committee for feedback and recommendations.

Commissioner Owens said that about 3 years ago there was a group from NC State that came in and conducted a series of meetings and the public was very receptive and provided information. We have a good group of knowledgeable people in the County that can contribute information. We definitely need to consider the big things that we know are going to have to be planned for and then add in the smaller details.

Commissioner Jordan said that the plan is needed especially for historical zoning and areas where economic growth will be promoted. A comprehensive plan will help us in steering parties of multiple interests in the right direction.

Ms. Baptiste explained the importance of updating ordinances once we have a vision of where we want to go. Ms. Baptiste would recommend compiling all of the ordinances into a Unified Development Ordinance with the exception of the flood plain policy.

Mr. Brothers asked Ms. Rountree if it would be better to hire an intern to help gather information or do we need to jump in and hire a consultant. Ms. Rountree said that Ms. Baptiste will need some type of assistance whether it is a consultant or the hiring of

additional staff. Ms. Felton asked if we have resources in the County that could help with soil sampling. Ms. Rountree stated that we have the availability to get soil samples. Ms. Felton said that we can compile information from different sources ourselves before we reach out have someone else come in and find the information.

Commissioner Owens said that what he is hearing is that we need to make sure we have overlay, when all policies are overlaid the information matches and is correct.

Mr. Brothers stated that he agrees with Ms. Rountree, Jennifer can't take on this task herself with all of the other task that she is working on. Commissioner Hofler said that sometimes we have a bad idea of consultants when we think about some of the consultants that come in with templates and want to force those templates onto Gates County.

Mr. Hawkins asked how long and how much help would be needed. Ms. Baptiste said that it would be depending on how in depth we want to take our comprehensive plan. If we stick with just the four basic elements it would take 5 months to a year. Mr. Hawkins asked if we have \$15,000 that was set aside for a consultant would it be enough money to pay for some additional staff. Ms. Rountree said that it would be dependent on what type of contract we draft and the type of staff we would hire. When we asked for proposals for a similar project the amounts ranged from \$25,000 to \$50,000.

Commissioner Jordan said that if the money is not spent it could go into the fund balance and then we could justify that we put \$15,000 in the fund balance for the project and then take it back out in the next fiscal year.

Ms. Felton asked if we could do some of the initial work ourselves and provide Ms. Baptiste with information before we contract someone. Ms. Baptiste said that she would like everyone in the room to be as hands on as possible and participate in the process as much as possible. We need to get as accurate of a vision as possible for the County.

Mr. Carter recommended that Ms. Baptiste come up with an outline of information that is needed for the comprehensive plan and then the information can be split between committee members to research. Ms. Baptiste said that as information is collected it is presented and analyzed to determine the next step and what the next information needed will be. We will get into the specifics of the comprehensive plan at a later date.

Commissioner Owens asked what would be the best way to determine the vision of the county and how will we go deeper than the dialogue of the group. How will we take the differences of ideas and compile a vision. Mr. Brothers said that we have taken projects like this before and tried to get them off the ground and it has fallen by the wayside. This needs to be an established forum with certain parameters or else it will change every time a conversation happens or people leave/enter the committee.

Commissioner Jordan said that this is the type of thing that needs to be presented to the Commissioners as a departmental report each month. Ms. Baptiste said that the intention is to make sure that every board is aware of the progress, ideas, and how we are moving forward so that no one is taken back when the final document is released. The number one way to keep a committee involved is by making sure that the communication flows and conversations stay active. Even if you are not on the committee that meets every month you will be privy to the information. We have to get a document that we can live with and understand that it is a living document that will need to be changed with issues arise. We can always do supplements and amendments to the comprehensive plan.

Mr. Brothers said that he would like to see a vision, directive, and timeline established for the committee and the Planner. We have to start planning now for what we want to do, especially if it involves requesting more budgetary funds. We have been talking about this for five years and there is no way that we can piece meal it together chapter by chapter, we need one person that looks at the entire document at one time.

Mr. Greene said that Chuck and Linda have both been on the Planning Board and by the time information is compiled and goes through all the channels of communication and reaches the commissioners it is almost obsolete. We need to support our Planner and

move forward with the funds that are allocated and when a new budget year comes we need to allocate whatever additional funds are needed. We have to work together, starting today, to get this process going.

Commissioner Hofler asked how we will go about finding the consultant. Ms. Baptiste said that we will draw up the plan and put out a request for proposals. We will select based on experience, familiarity with a CAMA community, reputation, and quality of work.

Commissioner Jordan said that we have to promote the cost effectiveness and better equity for all citizens if we have a comprehensive plan in place. Commissioner Jordan said that he would be willing to make the motion to approve the County Planner to compile information for advertising the request for proposals.

Mr. Eason said that we don't need to forget about the local attributes and look for cookie cutter plans. Ms. Felton said that we need to look for someone that is familiar with farming and trees and not someone from Charlotte. Ms. Baptiste said that there will be certain meetings that will involve bringing in regional specialist.

Commissioner Hofler said that the plan will be a tool for potential development in the area. Ms. Baptiste said that is exactly right and sometime developers will know the ordinance and plans better than the planner because they need the information.

Ms. Baptiste moved on to the topic of GIS and updating zonings by parcel numbers. We have talked about some additional layers being added such as cell towers with designation between public use and non-public use. We have received some historical layers so that we can see where subdivisions have taken place and where development has occurred. Commissioner Owens asked about incorrect mapping. Ms. Baptiste said that the company has not been receiving the rezoning information that gets approved. We have compiled a list of rezoning's that have occurred since 2007 to send to him for updates.

Ms. Rountree said now that Jennifer is very familiar with GIS and she is trying to work together with tax and emergency services to get a lot of the issues taken care of.

Commissioner Jordan said that he would like the option to print a line print instead of a picture that uses so much ink. Commissioner Felton said that he would like to see the system be in house instead of farming it out of the county. We have a lot of errors that simply come from someone that doesn't know the county inputting data. Commissioner Felton asked how often the information is updated. Ms. Baptiste said that the information was being submitted twice a year but we have now worked it out to send information quarterly.

Mr. Brothers asked who the authority is that makes sure that all departments are providing the information that needs to be updated. Ms. Rountree said that we have not had someone to take on this task but Jennifer has taken on the responsibility at this time.

Commissioner Felton asked why when a deed is recorded with the register of deeds it is not updated in GIS. Ms. Baptiste said that when a change is done the tax department updates their system and then it should update on GIS. The error is either on the tax department update or on the company. Mr. Felton said that we don't have that many land transactions on a daily basis and someone in house should be able to handle the load.

Chairman Hofler said we need to evaluate the dollar amount we are paying the GIS administrator and see if it can be done more effectively in house at that same dollar amount.

Ms. Baptiste said the Zoning Ordinance has been updated and copies are provided. Amendments that could be verified by minutes have been added, other amendments could not be verified by minutes.

Ms. Baptiste said there is nothing in the Zoning Ordinance stating the duties, regulations, and the operations of the Planning Board. This is something that needs to be added into

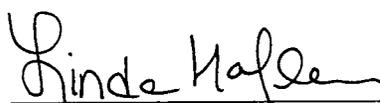
the ordinance before a whole update is given. Our Ordinance does not give legal authority to the Planning Board. With the unified development ordinance we will have all plans in one document that will reference each other.

Ms. Rountree announced that Cyrena Eitler with the Department of Defense will be at the February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting and invited members of the Planning Board and the Board of Adjustment to attend her presentation.

Ms. Baptiste in closing asked who would be interested in participating on the committee for the comprehensive plan. Commissioner Felton and Commissioner Owens, Joe Greene & Graham Hawkins, Wade Askew & John Carter volunteered.

**Adjournment**

Chairman Hofler adjourned the meeting.

  
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Linda Hofler, Chairman

  
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Melissa C. Lawrence, Clerk

GATES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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